WORDS OF RECONCILIATION.

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ANNOUNCEMENT.

We have decided to continue this magazine. This seems to us to be God's will, and therefore our duty, in the matter. Our friends and subscribers who have been concerned about its future may now be assured that we shall go on with the work. And to them we shall continue to look for aid in widening the circle of its readers and the area of its influence. Some of them have offered substantial aid. Others have encouraged us by expressions of earnest sympathy. For both sympathy and support we are sincerely grateful.

The difficulties of sustaining this work are by no means removed; and yet we are satisfied that it ought not to be given up. The need for it was never more imperative. This journal is filling a place which no other, either in this country or abroad, occupies. It has been the special mission of this magazine to preach the gospel of the resurrection. That gospel has not yet been received in its fullness by the Church. If it had, it would not have been so easy for the enemy to beguile some of her own children into the fatal error that Christianity can survive the surrender of the miracle of the resurrection. It is around this citadel of

our faith that the battle is being waged. Is the resurrection of Jesus a mere mythical appendage of the Christian faith, or is it the cornerstone? No satisfactory defence of the faith once delivered to the saints can be made except from the high ground concerning this doctrine which this magazine occupies. We have insisted that the Scripture becomes a pretense, the plan of the world a jumble, and the future of the human race a blank without this provision to restore to it life from the dead. In insisting that the restoration of all carries with it blessing for all, but graded according to fitness, we have sought, while guarding against the danger of universalism, to expose the current libel on the character of God by which this provision becomes to all but the redeemed Church an unutterable curse. To set this view before the Church we were serving in the ministry of the Gospel, as opposed to its creed of despair which it has already virtually abandoned, we employed the pages of this magazine and scattered them widely among its ministers. The result of this effort is known to our readers. Having discharged this duty to that Church, and given our testimony far and wide, it would seem that we might now lay down this burden. But the evidences have been so strong and numerous that the work is filling a unique and much needed place in the Church, that we dare not refuse the time and toil required to carry it on. We have also increasing evidence that many of our fellow Christians have been enlightened and profited by it. This has been testified in numerous letters, from some of which we have given extracts. In the absence of a congregation to which we might minister in person the Word of Life, it has been a source of thankfulness to know that some

scattered believers have been fed through these pages with that full Gospel of the grace of God which can be apprehended only as the meaning of our Lord's triumph over death is discerned.

The necessity for continuance has therefore seemed too great to justify us in withdrawing. And so, amid an increase of cares and in dependence upon God to give the necessary strength and means, we give ourselves to this work for another year.

ANOTHER VOLUME.—We have ordered each year a hundred copies of the annual volume to be bound. The volume for 1888 will soon be ready. The price for these volumes is one dollar, or the set of four volumes will be sent (postage paid) for three dollars. We will donate the four to the Library of any Theological Seminary upon the receipt of a postal from the Librarian authorizing us to send them at their charges by express. Our friends would aid us very much in this work, and aid in spreading the truth, by ordering one or more of these volumes for themselves or others. Either of the bound volumes will be sent with the magazine for a year for $1.75: or, the whole of them with the magazine for $3.00. The "Fire of God's Anger" or the "Mystery of Creation and of Man" will be sent with the magazine for $1.50.

PRESBYTERIAL CERTIFICATE.

Some of our friends have been anxious to know in what position we were left, as a minister, after withdrawing from the Presbytery. For their information we publish the certificate which the Stated Clerk was directed to prepare and

forward to us, and which at a subsequent meeting of the Presbytery was approved.

After reciting the facts of the case and the report adopted, in which it was stated that "If Mr. Baker could hold his views privately, without agitating the Church, we would be content to retain the same position as heretofore to one whom we sincerely love and honor for his piety and ability," and which closed by recommending his withdrawal if he thought it incumbent upon him to urge his views upon the attention of the Church, the paper reads as follows:

"On the adoption of this report by the Presbytery, Mr. Baker asked permission to withdraw from the ministry of our church. The Presbytery granted the permission asked by Mr. Baker.

"In attesting to the above facts, the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery would add that the Rev. Lewis C. Baker has been uniformly, and up to the date of this writing, held in kind and fraternal regard by all his brethren of the Presbytery; they have declared their confidence in his Christian character and sincerity, and they still feel this confidence; they remember gratefully the prominent part he has taken in their common labors for the extension of Christ's kingdom, and they now part with him with deep regret and with earnest wishes and prayers for his welfare. The action taken in his case was not of the nature of a prosecution, but rather of fraternal advice in answer to a request offered by himself, and we believe it was the result of honest and conscientious differences.

Attest:

HENRY REEVES,

Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of West Jersey."

Under the constitution of the Presbyterian Church, no man can be deprived of ministerial standing without a formal trial upon charges preferred and sentence of deposition. There was nothing of the kind in this action. It is evident that whatever authority as a minister was originally conferred at our ordination remains, although the right to exercise that authority in the Presbyterian Church was voluntarily surrendered. This was the understanding of the case by all the parties concerned.

ROBERT ELSMERE.

We have been reading this widely read book. We have also read Mr. Gladstone's review of it which we wish could be as widely read. That the book is interesting—its characters strongly drawn, and the religious problem it undertakes to solve strongly treated—no one will dispute. In these respects it is far in advance of some other recent attempts to discuss these problems under the veil of fiction.

The book brings us face to face with the profoundest question of the age. We are asked to consider, not only whether Christianity is a failure, but whether the whole Christian structure built upon the cornerstone of a risen Christ be not a baseless fabric. We are invited to confess that it is, and to consent to its demolition in order to the rearing upon its ruins of a new temple of humanity in which there shall be only a memorial tomb to the dead and martyred Jesus and the worship of his memory.

We have only two principal things to say about this book:

1. The Robert Elsmere here presented to us as the ideal saint of the new religion is not a Christian. By this we do not mean to say that he is not a good man, a righteous, self denying and saintly man. He is all this, but he is not a Christian. He is enthused with the love of humanity. He lays down his life for the brethren. He is a saint and a martyr, but of the type of Buddha and not of Christ. Never in any age was it so important as it is in this to define clearly what it is to be a Christian. The Scripture lines of definition have been all confused, until even the Church no longer clearly apprehends them. A Christian is a man who not only confesses with his mouth that Jesus is Lord and Christ, but believes in his heart that God hath raised Him from the dead (Rom. x. 9). He believes this not simply as a matter to which the New Testament writers in gospels and epistles bear constant and emphatic witness, but he has felt the power of His resurrection. He knows that Christ has risen because He has been revealed to and in him (Gal. i. 16). Men may call this delusion or mysticism, but thousands of believers in every age have thus known Him whom they have believed. This is why Christianity has lived, and will live through all these assaults. These Christians know that there is a divine power of life in humanity, and in their own souls and bodies, lifting them above the low level of their natural manhood into a new manhood whose potencies are spiritual and eternal. And they are sure that this could not be unless humanity had been raised above its natural and carnal conditions in some Son of Man in whom God dwelt and wrought out for the race this triumph. The Bible therefore not only teaches them to confess that Jesus is the

Christ. They recognize that the outcry of their heart and flesh for the living God has been answered in Him. They have the witness in themselves.

There is no evidence that Robert Elsmere, even in his earlier devotion as a clergyman of the Church of England, and a professed believer in the resurrection, did his work under this conscious inspiration of an indwelling Christ. If he had he never would have surrendered his faith in this vital doctrine to the behests of the naturalistic formula, "All miracles are impossible." A divine witness in the heart cannot be dislodged by assaults upon the outworks of human testimony. The gifted authoress who draws for us this fine character does not understand what it is to be a Christian. Renan and his school do not know, and cannot appreciate, the grounds upon which the Church believes in the resurrection. And therefore this eloquent description of a Christianity that shall discard it, and seek to build itself anew under the inspiration of the example of Jesus, instead of in the power of His risen life, is the merest vanity. No such thing is possible. If Christ be not risen, our faith is vain; we are yet in our sins; we have no hope of a future life; we are false witnesses of God (1 Cor. xv. 12–19).

If, then, Robert Elsmere had been a Christian, his life rooted and grounded in the risen Christ, he would have had another standard of judgment in this matter than the Squire's learned treatises or his own rationalistic tests. He was, indeed, a saint, but not a "saint in Christ Jesus." We beg our readers to study the meaning of this frequent New Testament definition of a Christian. But we ask them also to bear in mind what we have said in previous

articles of the distinction it warrants between this class and "the just." The hero of this book was eminently a good and righteous man. Like Cornelius, he would have been "accepted before God" on this ground. But even Cornelius did not yet know Christ and the power of His resurrection. Peter was sent to impart to him this, "in order that he might be saved." Such a man as Elsmere would find the reward of his good deeds "at the resurrection of the just." He would some day discover that in visiting the sick and feeding the hungry poor, he had done it ignorantly unto Christ, although he did not then believe in Him as the living Lord of men. We say this in order to guard against the inference that God takes no notice of and has no recompense for the good deeds of any but saints. These have their special place in His love and counsels. All the families of the earth are to be blessed in them. But there have been and are righteous men, not of this class, whose good deeds are kept in remembrance before God, and who shall "go away unto life eternal." When the veil that now hides His glory from their eyes is taken away, and Christ is revealed to them in His true character, they will gladly confess and worship Him as Lord. Such we believe to be the future reward of the just. But, we repeat, never will the Bible be understood, and the ways of God toward men be justified, until the well-marked distinction between the "man in Christ" and the merely good man is brought out clearly in the consciousness of the church and testified to before the world.

2. Our second remark is that if the church all through her history had rightly understood and proclaimed the meaning of the resurrection of the Lord, such books as

Robert Elsmere would never have been written. At least she would have been spared the grief and humiliation of such defections from among those nurtured on her own bosom, as this book and others of kindred origin give proof of. The glory of the Divine Christ has been tarnished, and the lustre of his triumph over death eclipsed, by the long denial within the Church that the whole of mankind has interest in that triumph. The countless generations of the dead are supposed to have passed forever beyond the reach of its benefits. Death, it is assumed, ends all hope for those who have not been saved in this life from their sins by this their only Saviour. Thus it is denied that He rose again that he might be Lord over the dead as well as the living. The gates of hell prevail against Him to hold fast forever these multitudes of captives. Or, if a resurrection be conceded to them, it is only for purposes of judgment and eternal damnation. No wonder that under such a dishonoring view of the results of this Messiah's work for the race, the meaning of His resurrection should have been crowded back into an unimportant place where it has become attenuated in many minds into a "Christian myth," and that even professed Christians are clamoring that it would be better for the Church to throw it overboard altogether as useless luggage. We do not hesitate to say that the meaning of this grand fact has not yet been properly understood by the Church. Its relation to the whole race of mankind, dead and living,has not yet been brought out. Its place in the scheme of creation and in the progress of its highest creature, man, toward the goal of his destiny as the son and heir of God is yet to be pointed out.

And this because theology has given us only a fractional Christ, whose death and resurrection achieved only a fractional redemption. The Church and mankind need a new gospel of the resurrection which shall show to men that the Divine Father, in providing for the ransom of all from death to another life, means blessing for all. Not that this blessing can come without moral fitness for it, or that it can in any way divest men of accountability for deeds done. But men need to be acquainted with and to be tested anew under a gospel which shall not conceal the divine love in this ransom, and which shall deal with men, not as candidates for eternal torment, but as under training for another life into which they are to be lifted by the Risen Son of Man. The point that this book makes against the Church for her failure to lay hold of the masses is well taken. She has gone too much upon the theory that the only thing worthy of her efforts is the endeavor to make saints of them, and for this but few of them are capable. She has discovered no hope for them short of this. And yet a true estimate of the redemptive value of resurrection would have taught her that men may fall short of saintship and yet reap a reward from right living in the life to come; and that, therefore, every advance in the rescue of men from animalism and evil passions, every cultivation of purer and higher impulses, every step toward the formation of a just and humane and unselfish character is so much future suffering saved, and so much gain toward a higher level in the life to come, in which every one must reap as they have sown. We have often spoken of the Church's appointed work toward the fallen and the outcast

in the ages to come. And this is the work for which she is in training here, and which lies ready to her hand all around us. To do this work intelligently and hopefully she needs to know that it is not all thrown away even where it fails to make saints. The life to come is not so dissociated from this life that any education in truth and righteousness is lost unless it reach the highest level. Robert Elsmere wrought among these degraded classes as if the conception of God which Christianity supplies were too narrow for their wants: and its traditional conception has been too narrow and unsympathetic. But the *full* Christianity of the New Testament is large enough to reveal the whole of God to men, to meet all their many-sided wants and to satisfy all their aspirations. And nothing is more needed to supply this just conception of God than a right view of His provision to redeem mankind from death. And this of course implies that His methods of working in human redemption all centre around a risen Christ. If Robert Elsmere had understood the place and meaning of this foundation fact in the Christian scheme, he never could have rejected it. And he would have found that it furnished him just the ground on which to work out his most cherished schemes and to fulfil his largest hopes for the elevation of his fellow-men. We long to see the day when the new adaptation of the Gospel to human needs after which he groped, and for which there is a need now strongly felt, shall be tried on these lines. For this right view of Christianity will educate men into right views of God and of their relation to Him. It will show them on the one hand the nature of his penalties—as inexorable and yet salutary. It

will give a new significance to death as the wages of sin, and to hell as that pit of destruction into which sin casts its victims, the burning of whose fires they already feel in the inflamed passions and ambitions, the cankerous diseases that consume them in body and soul. On the other hand it will give new significance to and magnify the grace of God in resurrection, which is rescue from this pit of death. It will show that, while God, in the gift of Christ as well as in the law of creation, has put a redemptive and remedial power in the gift of life, He must still keep all life in bonds and under judgment that is not purified and made eternal through union with Christ. But this "hope of the dead" insures that the process of education in life is not all confined to this brief experience of it, and that the failure of it, with its bitter penalty of death and hell, is not final and inevitable. Its law also of "according to deeds done" insures that no gain in this process made in this life, although it may not reach the goal of eternal life in Christ, will be lost. And therefore the highest motives remain, and the strongest encouragement for helping our fellow-men through all their faltering and stumbling to lead better lives—to enlarge and ennoble their minds through natural science, as Robert Elsmere did; to band them into guilds for self-help and unselfish work for others, and so to gradually make them receptive of that knowledge of God which purifies and saves. His great mistake was in not seeing how the doctrine of a Divine Christ, and of the provision of a future life for the race in Him, glorifies all such efforts and makes their results secure and eternal.

OUR LORD'S USE OF THE TERM "FIRE."

The term "fire" both in science and in Scripture denotes that destructive energy of nature by which she disintegrates and resolves into their component elements material substances and forms. All agencies of destruction, such as the sword, famine and plague, are sometimes put under one category and spoken of as "consuming fire." Even when pain or mental anguish are compared to fire, the idea of the destructive character of such experiences is always present. For they exhaust the vital energy and consume life.

Fire is thus the agent of death. Death is the burning out of life. Whether the combustion be swift and sudden, or under some slow form of disease, or the gradual decay of the life-powers, in either case it is the same in essence. The bodily form is broken down, and the elements that compose it dissolved. Anger, ambition, vice, lust, burn up the organism and hasten on the work of death.

The underlying idea of "fire," then, is that it is the agent of destruction. Even if there be a recreation in a purer form of the thing destroyed, still dissolution precedes the purgation.

This idea of the destructive energy of fire is uppermost in every instance of our Lord's use of the term. He was announced as having come to purge the threshing floor of the Jewish nation and of the world, and to burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Every tree which did not bear good fruit was to be hewn down and cast into the fire. His "spirit of judgment and of burning" was to go forth like flame into the midst of all human institutions, social,

national, ecclesiastical, and all that was unworthy was to be given up to destruction. Individuals were to be subjected to the same trial. The baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire, referred to in the same connection, was of the same order. For the Holy Spirit enters into a man's being, not only to consume his evil propensities, but ultimately to destroy the old man himself, in order to the re-creation of the man in Christ. The outward man must perish in order that the inward man may be renewed.

This thought must therefore govern our Lord's frequent use of the terms "hell fire," "furnace of fire," "eternal fire." These do not describe a gulf of material flame. They represent that pit of death into which the destructive forces of sin thrust the bodies and souls of men. The lawless forces of evil are at work now upon those who yield to their dominion. The fires of hell are already kindled in the bodies and souls of many around us. And if unchecked they will not only consign the body to the grave, but torment the unclothed soul until it also is destroyed in hell. (Luke xvi, 24; Matt. x, 28.)

But, as already intimated, the fire that thus terminates in hell may be converted by the presence of the Holy Spirit in a man to a salutary purgation. Where there is a surrender of the old man with his affections and lusts to this spirit of judgment and of burning which searches out all the evils of the life, exposing and destroying them, out of this bath of fire the soul rises into new life. It is evidently with this thought in mind that Jesus repeatedly urged His disciples (Mark ix, 43-49) to cut off an offending hand, to pluck out a lustful eye, for it was profitable

to consent thus to the destruction of one of our members rather than that the whole body should go into hell where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. We must either judge ourselves, and willingly surrender to destruction the evils that have been wrought into the fabric of our lives or the whole fabric must be irresistibly destroyed. For, adds He, "Every one must be salted with fire; salt is good." These warning words, which are main pillars in the dogma of endless torment, were not spoken to the multitude, but in a private instruction to disciples who had been contending who should be greatest. They show that disciples are the ones who are regarded as in danger of hell-fire. For *our* God, not God out of Christ as the text is constantly misquoted and misapplied, is a consuming fire. *Everyone* must be salted with this fire. The whole Christian life is a voluntary surrender of the old nature, the carnal man, to this process of destruction. If men do not do this willingly, the fire of God's anger against sin must hereafter do the work.

This then was the fire which Jesus came to send upon the earth, and which was already kindled,—a fire that should consume all evil out of human society, and that should make an end of the natural man as incapable of eternal life and unworthy of the kingdom of God. In one notable passage He speaks of this eternal fire as prepared for the devil and his angels. The devil and his angels are the spiritual forces of evil that lie behind and energize the destructive forces of nature. It would be easy to show by Scripture reference that they have power not only over the sinful desires of the mind, but over diseases of body and of mind and over death. The final result of redemption is to be a new heavens and

earth wherein dwelleth righteousness and in which there shall be no more curse. The devil and his angels are to be destroyed out of the system which they derange and pollute. The fire, then, prepared for them suggests that final purgation of the cosmos which shall issue in its renovation. Men who will not now rise above this present order and break away from their bondage to the world must go down with the system into their pit of destruction. This fire, however, while it must destroy out of the system the devil and his angels and make an end of them, is not necessarily the final end of the men cast into it. We have repeatedly shown that beyond this pit of destruction mankind have been ransomed to another life through resurrection. It is not a future risen body, but this present embodiment in manhood which Jesus constantly refers to as in danger of destruction. By surrender to Christ the soul of it may now be saved and so the whole man be saved—passing now from death unto life. By the refusal of Him, its destruction goes on without arrest in both body and soul until the being made as a man in God's image is lost, vanishing as a naked spirit into the outer darkness. But even these realms of death are not beyond the power of Christ's resurrection. "All shall be made alive; but every man in his own order."

It is most important that we should thus fix the place of the consuming fire of which Jesus speaks. It was in His mind a present impending danger. He did not then speak of the bridge across the gulf to be made by His resurrection, because the light of this great hope could not break upon the world until after He was risen from the dead. But we shall misconceive the meaning of this great event and misrepresent the gospel

and the character and ways of our Redeeming God, unless we locate this fire of His wrath where it properly belongs, in that pit of death and destruction which lies just across the confines of this present life; the doors into which indeed lie open all around us, and into whose caverns we can look, as the scenes of wretchedness and vice which this world presents pass before us. The hell from which we need to be saved yawns just beneath our feet. Its fires are kindled in our own breasts and burn along the fevered channels of our daily lives. We therefore need immediate salvation through Him who died to save us from our sins. And although His grace and power shall some day recover all from death, yet resurrection must proceed according to the great law of life, "to every seed his own body," and "they that have done ill," can only come forth still under judgment and exposed to the hazards of the second death.

GEHENNA—AN INQUIRY.

A prevalent assumption of both plain and learned Christians in our day is that the term Gehenna describes a punishment later and more severe than that which "Hades" denotes. Leaving out now the question of severity, what ground is there for this common view that the hades condition is prior to that destruction which is visited upon the wicked in gehenna? An examination of the New Testament passages in which the words are used reveals the fact that "hades" uniformly refers to a penal condition after death, and that "gehenna," instead of being the more

remote, describes a punishment immediately impending. It denotes a destruction through which one is "brought" or "cast down to hell" (hades). We observe—

1. That gehenna is spoken of as a present fact. St. James (iii. 6) speaks of the tongue as now "set on fire by gehenna." Our Lord speaks of the Scribes and Pharisees as children of gehenna (Matt. xxiii. 15). To be a child of hell is to have one's conduct and opinions governed by those evil forces which emanate from hell. Gehenna is here conceived of, not as a future lake of fire—the second death—but as an existing pit of destruction.

2. The passages in which Jesus warns men against being cast into it evidently relate to a near and present danger. We cite the principal ones (new version).

"Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire." Matt. v. 22.

"And if thy right hand cause thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into gehenna" (vs. 29).

St. Luke reports these words as follows: "Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into gehenna."

By comparing the eighth and ninth verses of Matthew xviii., it is seen that the terms "gehenna of fire" and "eternal fire" are equivalent.

In Mark ix. 43—49, we read again:

"And if thy hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off: it is good for thee to enter into life maimed, rather than having thy two hands to go into gehenna, into the unquenchable fire. * * * And if thine eye cause thee to stumble,

cast it out: it is good for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into gehenna; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will we season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace one with another."

All the above warnings were addressed to *disciples.* They were part of that private teaching by which Jesus prepared His chosen followers for the work that lay before them. They were designed to teach them that it was only by the path of complete self-surrender to the will of God that they could enter into life. Whatever in their feelings and conduct caused them to offend must be lopped off. Every servant of God and heir of His kingdom must thus put himself upon the altar. "Every one must be salted with fire." Better far submit to this sacrifice than that sin should be allowed to do its destroying work upon the whole man. Here, throughout, the reference is to a present danger—a progress in corruption which goes on to consume like fire the energies of the life, and leaves the man the prey of those irresistible forces which destroy both body and soul. Better far to be salted now with the fire of self-sacrifice than to be submerged in this fire of destruction. Manifestly there is no warrant for conceiving of this penalty as one long deferred. The destructive forces that prey upon the bodies and souls of men are active now. They begin their work this side the grave. The parable of the rich man (Luke xvi.) shows that it does not end there. But it is not a destruction delayed until after a resurrection: it is immediate. When the Lord speaks of the sacrifice of an eye or hand in order that the whole

body may not suffer this destruction, He is speaking of this present embodied life. There is not the slightest reason in His language, nor in the circumstances or opinions of His hearers, to suppose that He was speaking about a future resurrection body, to be cast into a future gehenna. No Jew would so imagine. Resurrection in their view was deliverance from gehenna, not a preparation for being cast into it.

As to the nature of this destruction, the terms which describe it cannot be literal. The Lord did not mean that the literal eye should be plucked out or the foot cut off, but that the ambition or sensual passion whose roots lie deep in the soil of human nature must be mortified—that is, put to death. So the unquenchable fire of gehenna is not literal flame. The term stands for those remorseless, inexorable forces which sin sets in motion in the bodies and souls of men, and which break down and destroy them. This dissolution begins here. The steps of an evil course even now take hold on hell. The fires of gehenna are already kindled in the bodies—they drink up the spirits—of wicked men all around us. There are hells of blasphemy, of misery and of madness into which evildoers are cast before our eyes. But Jesus warns us that beyond the death of the body the work of dissolution goes on until even the soul may be destroyed in hell. But let us not strain His words beyond their proper meaning. They all relate to that original penalty which God attached to sin, which is death. The penalty, whatever it is, is not the remote consignment to hell of a remotely resurrected man. It lies this side of resurrection. Gehenna precedes even that long captivity in hades in which spirits in prison await resurrection.

So that, rightly understood, not one of these passages contradicts the uniform teaching of Scripture that resurrection, whenever it reaches these captives, although it be long delayed and to an inferior order of life, bringing with it judgment and restraint, is yet a deliverance and a blessing.

ETERNAL PUNISHMENT.

It is well known that the Greek words in Matt. xxv, 31-46—"And these shall go away into eternal punishment"—are by competent critics translated "age-lasting restraint." This, for instance, is the force given to the words by Robert Young, author of the Analytical Concordance and of a literal version of the Scriptures. Many persons, however, refuse this rendering because it seems to limit the life also into which the righteous depart. We have shown that, whatever be the duration of their life—which from other Scriptures we know to be endless—the punishment spoken of must be interrupted by the resurrection which graciously comes to all men by the righteousness of one man, as death came to all by the sin of one. Sooner than deny this principle of redemptive resurrection which underlies all Scripture, it would be much more reasonable for those who feel themselves bound by the literal phrase, "everlasting punishment," to interpret it in some such way as this. Let us suppose that there are two realms of life in creation; one in which life is in harmony with the universal life of God, and in which it is, therefore, unfettered and endless. In the other region life is more or less in fetters, under correction,

and restraint, liable to torment and even to destruction. For how can personal being exist forever out of harmony with God?

Into one or the other of these regions of existence men are consigned by the universal Judge. In the realm of pure life existence must be endless because the creature is in perfect accord with the life of God. In the other realm, which is also conceived of as eternal, the creature is under perpetual restraint. The unjust and unloving are consigned to this region in which punishment abides forever; but they may not forever be kept in it. It may be a region into which men may "go away," and out of which they may again be brought, while the character of the region itself remains unchanged and enduring.

Or again, if it be insisted that the word eternal admits of no limit, an explanation supplementary to the foregoing may be found in the well known Scripture distinction between the "old man" and the "new man." These coexist in the same person; but the one is viewed as irreclaimably corrupt. Its end is therefore destruction. And this destruction is hopeless and eternal. The new man, the Christ-nature in us, is the eternal heir of the kingdom. His life is eternal. The Divine judge sits enthroned over every human life, gathering the wheat into His garner, and consigning the chaff, the husk of the old nature, to unquenchable fire. And so all humanity is being sorted. The old sinful humanity, selfish, unrighteous and unloving, must have this doom. It must be burnt up in the eternal fire. But, as in the case of the Christian this destruction of his former self—the old man—is in order to his salvation as a new man in Christ Jesus, so this eternal "cutting

off" (kolasis) of the wicked, and consignment to the eternal fire, may show that in *this character of their old manhood* they must be forever destroyed. But this would not exclude the hope of their possible rescue out of this death in a new form of manhood bringing with it new opportunities of obedience and life.

It must always be borne in mind that all these words of Christ concerning human destiny were spoken before the full light of His triumph over death was turned upon this dark subject. He had not yet risen. And the great hope for humanity, both dead and living, bound up in that event, was yet to be revealed. This explains why the Apostles in no one of their sermons or epistles make that use of these words of Jesus which we should expect if they had put that meaning upon them which found its way into the later creeds.

MATTHEW XXV. 46.

The two most ancient MSS. of the Italic version, or Latin translation of the New Testament in use in Italy, Spain and Africa from the middle of the second century before Jerome's Vulgate appeared, read in Matt. xxv. 46 *æternum ignem* instead of *æternum supplicium*, "These shall go away into eternal fire." These MSS. (codices of Verona and Vercelli of the old and unrevised text of the fourth century) are in general much relied on by Tischendorf as showing the state of the Greek text from which they were translated, and are renowned for their exact literality. It seems to follow therefore, that, although no Greek MSS. remain which read differ-

ently from those of modern date, there must have been some in the early part of the second and third centuries, and those of sufficient authority to be used as the basis of the African Latin version. See also Dr. Westcott's article on Latin versions in Smith's Dictionary iv. p. 3451. An example of the illicit introduction of this very word *kolasis* by some later copyists is seen in the doubtful clause of Mark iii. 29, "Shall be guilty of eternal judgment (or sin as in Alex. MS.). However, what remains undisputed is that the Latin populations of Italy, Spain and Africa from the middle of the second century till Jerome's day read, "These shall go away into eternal fire."—*White's Life in Christ,* p. 428.

To those who would rest an appalling doctrine on a word, one or two things might be said. Many critics believe that Matthew wrote in Hebrew, and that the Greek is a translation. The Ethiopic gives "judgment." The oldest Latin versions, *ignis.* Augustine (*et al.*) *combustionem.*

CHRISTIAN UNION.

We are persuaded that the one thing needed above all others, in order to dispose the hearts of all true Christians toward union, is a right view of the purpose of God in the calling of the church. Many persons look upon the church as a society of good people, banded together for their own spiritual improvement, and for the purpose of influencing others to become Christians in order to salvation. This is true as far as it goes, but it falls far below the Scriptural conception of the church as the body of

Christ, pervaded by His life, and now being prepared to take part with Him in those administrations of power and blessing by which He shall subdue all things unto God. In the common view the salvation of the individual soul is the one thing important, and the church is only useful as it subserves this end. For it she exists.

But in the wide Scripture view the important thing is a perfected body, one with the Head, and made a fit instrument to take part with Him in His work of saving and blessing the world. The church's great work of salvation lies in the future. Creation and mankind, as a part of it, will not be delivered from its bondage to corruption until the "manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. viii, 19–23). But it is plain from the last prayer of Jesus for His disciples, that they cannot take on this glorified character nor enter upon this work until they are "perfected into one" (Jno. xvii, 23, R. V.) The very first duty of the church then, before the work of soul-saving, is to seek this "perfection into one." The world will not believe, nor will the creature be delivered until it is attained.

NOTES ON CURRENT TOPICS.

Presbyterian Subscription.—A correspondent of *The Presbyterian*, Nov. 10th, quotes with approbation a recent article of President Patton in the *Princeton Review* as follows:

"It is important to ask what is meant by subscription to the Confession of Faith? For this settles the question, What is an offence? Here the practice in Scotland differs from the custom in America. It is not understood that our ministers subscribe to the Confession of Faith *in ipsissimis verbis*. They 'receive and adopt' it 'as containing the system of doctrine taught

in the Word of God.' Hence in an ecclesiastical trial the question whether a given departure from the Confession is an offence would be debatable. . . . By the provisions of our own Book of Discipline it would seem that in determining a question of heresy there is a fixed and variable element, and that it is the living and possibly the changing voice of the Church that must tell us whether this or that anti-confessional doctrine is a heresy that 'infers deposition.' In the nature of the case, therefore, there can be no guarantee that important parts of the Confession of Faith will not gradually come under the category of dead-letter law, and there can be no assurance that a church may not abandon every distinctive tenet, though, for the sake of vested rights, it may still continue to profess its ancient creed and wear its ancient name. This only shows, however, that great responsibility rests upon those who, as the interpreters of the church's faith to-day, are making the precedents that will be cited in all time to come."

"I quote these words of President Patton because of what is meant by subscription to the Confession of Faith is being more or less discussed. In some cases the discussion is carried on by persons belonging to other communions, who, doubtless unintentionally, misrepresent the position of the Presbyterian Church. And the question is of interest to excellent men, who are being invited to the office of ruling elder in our churches. The subscription required of ministers is wisely required of the Christian men who are elevated to the dignity of ruling elder. They wish to enter upon their office understandingly as well as conscientiously. In the accurate and lucid statements of Pres. F. L. Patton they find light and encouragement."

Encouragement for what? Why do these "excellent men who are invited to the office of ruling elder" need to be encouraged to make the required subscription? Everybody knows that the more intelligent and conscientious of them stumble at the hard points in the system, and especially at its statement that all of mankind who die out of this life unsaved are "to be punished with most grievous and unspeakable torments without intermission with the devil and his angels in hellfire forever." But these men are told that "the living voice of the church" no longer endorses, or at least no longer proclaims this harsh doctrine. And they are here assured on high authority that this neglect of it virtually remands it to the region of "dead-letter law."

which is still retained on the statute book "for the sake of vested rights."

We knew, indeed, before we left it, that the Presbyterian Church had sunk down to this low level in this matter of subscription, but we hardly expected to see a public confession of it from such high quarters. Is it, then, a matter of secondary importance what public and authorized testimony the Church shall bear before the world in a matter of the most tremendous human interest? Is the claim of "vested rights" superior to the claim of a good conscience before God and man? Is the Church, then, no longer to be the pillar and ground of *the truth?* Is it more important to preserve chartered rights and venerable institutions than it is to be open to the truth as God shall make it known, and be at all times its faithful witness?

It was for the purpose of testing these questions that we raised the issue in the Presbyterian Church which resulted in our withdrawal from it. The Presbytery in their report upon our case declared "that if Mr. Baker could hold his views *privately*, and not insist upon agitating the Church, they would be content to retain the same relations with one whom we sincerely love and respect for his ability and piety." It would seem then that our offence was not so much departure in doctrine; there are plenty of ministers and members in that Church who are just as recalcitrant in heart. But the repose of the Church! that must not be disturbed. May God hasten the day when His professing Church shall have higher views than all this of her solemn duties and responsibilities before God and man.

Unfair.—We clip the following paragraph from the *Presbyterian.*

Canon Farrar says: "The old rapacity of the slave-trader has been followed by the greedier and more ruinous rapacity of the rum-seller." According to the latest account the same Canon Farrar has been earnestly contending that there is to be no retribution in the long future either for the "rapacious" slave trader, or the "greedier" rum-seller.

Why cannot religious papers deal fairly with their opponents?

Any one who is familiar with Canon Farrar's books, or who has read his recent address at Manchester, knows that there is nothing farther from his mind than that the long future contains no retribution for such evil-doers. He has never taught that the more hardened of them may not suffer endlessly. But he has expressed the hope that their punishment for sin in the long future may finally bring them to such repentance and renewal that their sufferings shall cease, because the sin that made them necessary shall be gone.

An Agnostic.—In a recent sermon, at the Athenæum in Brooklyn, the Rev. H. O. Pentecost is reported to have said:

"I do not say there is no God, but I do say that I am entirely ignorant on the subject of God. I am an agnostic in the spiritual world and do not affirm or deny the existence of a God. I will willingly give this platform to any one who will come here and prove that there is a personal God, that prayers are efficacious or that miracles are real. And if they can prove it, beyond the question of a doubt, I will take back all I have said and become as much of an enthusiast as any one."

It is sad to see a man drifting so far away from the faith he once preached. When once faith in the Divine Christ and in His resurrection from the dead is surrendered, nothing better is to be hoped for. It may be that the great fact on which the Church is built is rather one of testimony than of proof addressed to human reason. But it has proved stable enough to sustain the hopes of generation after generation of the best and noblest of mankind. There has been a testimony to the heart which those who have heard it have known to be the witness of the Spirit of God. The soul of man has always conceived for itself a destiny beyond the limits of this present order of the world, and Christianity is based upon the fact that one who was pre-eminently the Son of Man, through death and resurrection, achieved for it this destiny. The gospel is the good news that He won this victory for all His brother-men; and therefore the heart of humanity will still cling to this hope set before it, despite these agnostic demands for proof. May God give to us unto

whom it hath been given to believe on His name grace, amid abounding defection, to confess that Jesus is the Christ, and to believe in our hearts that God hath raised Him from the dead.

THE "NERVE OF MISSIONS."—The third and final refusal of the American Board to commission the Rev. W. H. Noyes as a Foreign Missionary, and that, too, after his ordination to that work by a special council convened for that purpose, has revived public interest in the future probation question, and makes it probable that an ultimate split among the adherents of that Board is inevitable. Both parties in this controversy are in a most unfortunate position. On the one side the Board stands pledged to the theory that there is no Scriptural warrant for the view that any of the heathen who die out of this life unsaved can possibly be reached by the redeeming grace of God in the life to come, and that, to hold that they can cuts the nerve of missions. On the other side earnest young men who hold that there is a reasonable hope that before the final judgment the knowledge and grace of Christ may in some way reach such heathen, and who are anxious to carry now to them the story of salvation, are refused appointment by the Board, and the large number of their intelligent constituency who sympathize with these young men are denied the opportunity of helping them to go through this agency. Both sides are sadly in need of light on this subject. Both need to know that the view of "final judgment" to which they stand committed is a fiction. Jesus taught that His judgment of the world should begin at His exaltation to be both Lord and Christ—before that generation passed away. He further taught that men come into the world under judgment "condemned already," and that the only deliverance from this condemnation is through faith in Him as the anointed Deliverer. A certain class—a chosen seed—are now called to believe on His name, and so pass from death unto life. All others go down to death under the primal curse. They pass into the penal condition of death—captives in hell (sheol). But He also proclaimed Himself as Lord over the dead as well

as the living, and that His power of judgment and deliverance should reach all these captives (John v. 29). He gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

When will these brethren come to see that the grace brought to all mankind by the world's Redeemer is redemption out of this death through resurrection—each in his own time and order, and that whatever opportunities the future may bring them must come in with this renewal of their life. It is after judgment is satisfied, not before, that grace comes in to take up their case. Hence the Gospel to be preached to all the world is not a salvation for a limited few, but a salvation from the race-sentence to death for all the world. Whether this salvation shall issue in eternal life to any is now, and ever must be, made dependent upon the personal reception of Christ the Saviour. But the work of missions now is to preach these glad tidings of great joy of a Saviour risen to be Lord and Judge over all the dead as well as the living. And the nerve of missions is to be found in the offer of immediate escape from judgment, and the present gift of eternal life to all who believe, and in the priestly prerogatives to which these chosen and consecrated ones are called. They are the Church of the first-born, to be gathered out of all nations, through whom the blessings of this salvation are to reach the later born. Yielding themselves now to death with Christ unto sin and the world, they are to be saviours with Him of their brethren who have lost their heritage in life. The Chinaman who reveres his ancestors is to be urged to believe on and yield himself to this Christ in order that he may become the vehicle of this salvation to those of his kindred who have died without the knowledge of it. If the nature of the Church's calling and her priestly place in the plan of ages were understood, we should hear no more about this "hope of the dead" as cutting the nerve of missions. On the other hand it supplies the highest motive, and the very motive now needed, to give missionary work a worthy place in the eyes of the heathen, and a noble stimulus to the consecrated men and women who engage in and sustain it.

The whole view of the basis of missions must be changed by a new and more scriptural view of judgment, of the meaning of

death as the wages of sin, of resurrection as rescue from death, and as a gracious provision for all, of the way of eternal life as being the same strait and narrow way in this world and in all worlds, and of the wide scope of God's great plan by which the first-born from the dead become a chosen seed of blessing to the later born.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS.

From an Episcopal clergyman :

I shall be extremely sorry if you find yourself obliged to discontinue the publication, as you seem to have been providentially raised up to pursue a line of Biblical investigation hitherto strangely neglected, and which promises fruits of inestimable value to Christian truth.

From a minister in Maine :

Your Magazine received this morning is a revelation to me. I saw some time back, I think in the *Congregationalist*, a notice of your book, but in such terms that I dismissed you as one of the meteors of the theological sky, not likely to do anyone much good or harm. But now I strongly incline to believe you have, as respects the question of retribution and final destiny got at the *root of the matter*. The conventional orthodoxy and the conventional heterodoxy, both alike, miss it. Andover has too much of seventeenth century theology, and too little of spiritual insight, to allow her to launch forth as a genuine explorer on the sea that confronts her. I want to know more of you. It looks as if God, and not the Doctors of Divinity, had couched your eye. Nothing but poverty, which is the most conspicuous accident of a preacher, prevents my sending at once for your magazine and book.

A Presbyterian elder writes from central New York :

For some time I have desired to write to you and again express my wish that you should continue your publication. I esteem it a privilege to contribute the enclosed ten dollars towards that object, as I feel that I have in a measure shared its benefits since I became a subscriber. I shall continue to help support it by my subscription and in other ways if possible, both on your own account and for the love of the truth.

Allow me to say that the light you have shed has so illumined the Scriptures as to be of lasting benefit to my soul, for which I express to you my sincere gratitude. I take great delight in reading your books and magazine and pray and trust that they will accomplish great good. To me, since reading them, the Word of God takes on fresh beauty and becomes radiant with mercy and love. How wonderful are God's ways and past finding out! Peacefully may we rest in Him.

From a Presbyterian pastor:

You know my sentiments as to your work, for I have written you from time to time. I know not how to advise you as to the future of your publication, but I wish to send you my best wishes and full sympathy and the enclosed contribution toward the work if you are able to continue, or toward any deficiency in case you feel obliged to suspend. May God greatly bless and comfort you in all your undertakings.

From a friend in Brooklyn:

If the way is made plain for you to go on with your good work, I will take five numbers for the coming year, and will do all in my power to make it known, and the glad tidings of a redemptive resurrection for all. The knowledge of this godlike truth gives the heart rest and blessed liberty. Thank God for increasing light in the knowledge of our God and of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. The Scriptures of truth are now harmonized as they were intended to be by the Divine Author. We can see and rejoice in the eternal purpose of our Father who hath called His church into joint heirship with His dear Son, our blessed Lord and Saviour, as a first fruits for the blessing of the whole human race and of the universe; for all things in the heavens and in the earth are to be headed up in Him. We now can pray understandingly, "Thy kingdom come."

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